Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh during the past six months;

(b) whether it is a fact that poachers have recently killed the forest personnel of Kailadevi forest and Ranthambore Tiger Sanctuary in Rajasthan and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government have formulated any plan to combat the problem of poaching and encroachment, and if so, what are the details?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) The information is being collected from the concerned State Governments and will be placed on the Table of the House.

(b) On 10-4-93, two forest personnels were killed by Poachers near Kaila Devi sanctuary in the buffer area of Ranthambore Tiger Reserve.

(c) The steps taken by the Government to check Poaching/killing of Wild animals in the States are as under:

i. Central assistance is provided to State/UT Govts, for strengthening anti-poaching infrastructure.

ii. The Directorate of Wildlife Preservation through its network of Regional Offices and Sub Regional Offices keeps a check on trade in wildlife produce to prevent any illegal shipments.

iii. Raids are carried out by the Wildlife Authorities whenever information of illegal trading in wild animals reaches them.

iv. Cooperation of Police, Coast Guard and Army is also taken in apprehending the poachers and illegal traders.

v. India is extending full cooperation to other countries in preventing illegal international trade in its capacity as a Member of CITES.

Mangrove Action Project

1045. SHRI P. UPENDRA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Mangrove Action Project (MAP) has urged the Union and the Orissa Governments to honour the commitment to the Ramsar Convention in protecting the Chila Lake; and

(b) what action has been taken by Government to act upon the request of the MAP ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) No proposal called the Mangrove Action Project (MAP) has been received. The Chilka Lake is designated as one of the wetlands tinder the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention). An action plan for conservation of the Chilka lake has been prepared by the State Government of Orissa. The action plan includes measures for soil conservation, weed control, desiltation, wildlife protection and environmental awareness. An amount of Rs. 112.30 lakhs has been so far released to the State Government for implementation of this plan.

Poaching of Rhinos at the Kaziranga National Park

1046. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: DR. BAPU KALDATE :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that poaching of rhinos at the Kaziranga National Park has assumed alarming proportion;

(b) if so, what is the total number of rhinos killed by the poachers -at the end of 1992 and since the beginning of 1993 and what is the present population in the National Park; and

(c) what measures have been taken by Government to put an end to the poaching of rhinos ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) Rhino poaching in Kaziranga Sanctuary has become a serious menace to the conservation efforts of the Government. Four Rhinos in November, 92 and seven Rhinos in December, 1992 were killed in the Park by the poachers. During the current year upto 4-4-93, total number of rhinos killed by poachers was 18. The present population of rhinos is estimated to be 1164 as against 1129 of 1991 census.

(c) The measures taken by the Government to prevent poaching of Rhinos include :

i. The Rhino has been included in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, thereby giving the species maximum possible legal protection and imposing a complete ban on hunting of the Rhinos in India. The act provides for stringent punitive measure against poaching of this animal.

ii. Assistance under centrally sponsored scheme "Conservation of rhinos in Assam" is provided for strengthening measures against poaching, floods, fires and encroachments and for acquisition of land to expand protected area. Under this scheme additional protection squads equipped with arms, wireless sets, vehicles, boats etc., have been created. This scheme covers all the natural habitats of Rhino in Assam. The scheme alongwith resources has been transferred to State Sector from 1992-93.

iii. With international cooperation a ban on international trade in rhino horn and other animal products from the rhino has been enforced under the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES).

iv. Government of India has established 4 regional offices at Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, headed by officers of the rank of Deputy Director, for the purpose of better check of wildlife trade. These regional offices are further supported by three sub-regional offices at Cochin, Guwahati and Pathankot for meeting the needs of a more decentralised control set up in the interest of trade and commerce as also for better regulation.

v. For securing greater involvement of other enforcement agencies like coast guards, ITBP, army etc., short term training courses are being planned/conducted at the Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun.

Depleting habitat in the Neriyamangalain Range

1047. SHRI MOHINDER SINGH LATHER : SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :